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"TRIUMPHANT OVER PAIN"

BY THE AUTHOR OF
"*ESPECIALLY* WILLIAM BISHOP OF GIBRALTAR AND MARY HIS WIFE," "THE CUP OF WAR," "WAYSIDE LAMPS," ETC.

Bushe, Elizabeth Crawshaw (Turner)
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"Who best can drink His cup of woe,
Triumphant over pain,
Who patient bears his cross below,
He follows in His train."

"Now are *they* the sons of GOD.
. . . When He shall appear, *they* shall be like Him."

1 John iii. 2.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
Reverting	1
Southam	11
Starting at Netley	15
Pumford from the Dardanelles	25
Private Child	39
Davis and Louie	46
"The Harvest Festival"	53
Sulliver	59
Mothers and Wives	69
Skeggs—the Tram Conductor	79
Christmas, 1916	88
Tom Scott	99
An Unknown Warrior	110
Epilogue	114

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"TRIUMPHANT OVER PAIN."

REVERTING.

Across his cheerful dinner table Sir Evelyn Wood once asked me—

"What things are really essential in daily life?" and my immediate reply was—

"Affection and old boots."

With more time for thought and less desire to be epigrammatic, I should say now, in 1917, that two of the chief essentials for a woman are the work she likes best, and the knowledge that her men—husband, or son, or both—have done a fine thing.

If we get this, we can praise God and never fuss about the cost.

. . . . . .

In April, 1915, Chris was still stuck at Harmouth, commanding his Coast Defences, and I was living in banishment a

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few miles inland, making the best I could of a telephone message twice a day, and meetings in the town whenever he could spare me half an hour.

Wives of officers on the East Coast were not allowed to live inside the defences just then; they lived where they could, and snatched an hour with their husbands, to walk with them or see them, anywhere. I learnt a vivid sympathy with the little maids of all work, who do all their love makings and partings in the street or not at all.

One afternoon, when the once sleepy seaside town had become all a jostle with soldiers and blue-jackets, mothers and wives, the pavements almost a solid block and the dusty road dangerous with incessant traffic of lorries, cars, and bicycles, Chris met me at the station just as usual, and when I asked if there were any news, he took no notice but mentioned the dust of the street and enquired for the children.

Properly matched couples should be

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opposites in character, and in one respect we are most proper, for when I have something on my mind it is almost unbearable to me not to mention it at once, and with emphasis, to every soul who could conceivably care to hear it. But when Chris has something special to say, he puts it off as long as he can, cuts it amazingly short, and only tells me.

On this momentous day, he strode along by my side, acknowledging the incessant salutes of the stream of men, until his arm seemed to move like an automaton, and listening to my small talk, and then quite suddenly, in the middle of the blowy noisy street, I had one of the best moments of my life.

For he looked at me sideways with the sudden queer wrinkle about his nose which is his only sign of strong feeling and said, "I'm for France."

"Going to France! Do you mean you are giving up Harmouth?"

"Yes"—and then after a slight pause—

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"I'm not going out as a Brigadier. They meant me to, but French filled up the vacancy out there. What they want is a Lieutenant-Colonel who knows the new Howitzers."

"But a General can't go *back* to being a Lieutenant-Colonel."

"Well, *I* can; *I've reverted.*"

There is a world where all things are four square and where the people have new names upon their foreheads. I did not see the dusty road for a moment while Chris's new name became clear to me. Probably it takes a woman who has been the wife of a junior subaltern to appreciate fully what it meant. The cross swords on the shoulder straps, the oak leaves on the General's cap, were very precious in my sight—but this—oh! *this* was a lift out of the ordinary ruts of life altogether.

"*Reverted,*" I echoed. Although I seemed choking I also felt at least ten feet high. "And what did you think *I* should say about it?"

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"Didn't think," he replied, with the same funny wrinkle twitching his face. "I knew all right."

Of course then he tried to make out that it was quite the ordinary thing, just what any man would do, and in fact almost a question of business, since Harmouth had become of less importance as its long-expected bombardment had never come, and every soldier burned to get to France.

But I let all that pass quietly by. Presently there would be France and anguish, husband and son both in the thick of it, but this hour no one could ever take from me.

"You have gone up top this time. We shall never beat this," was all I could find to say.

"It'll be an awful job for you, I'm afraid," he went on to remark. "I shall be off directly, and you'll have to give up the Manor, and clear all our things out of Government House as well, and we shall drop a tremendous lot of pay."

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"That's nothing," I said. And it wasn't. It all got done in a very short time and with less fuss than many people make over packing for a holiday. War teaches one that nothing matters, *except* "To keep one's soul." You can't do that unless your dearest and best are doing the finest thing they know—but when you see they have done that as a matter of course, *then* you begin to feel something of the Peace of God which passeth all understanding.

Very well—the packings, and sellings, and cleanings up were nothing—the children went away to Skateshill to their kind aunt, and the houses were given up. Among a hundred last things to be done, on the day before we left, I thought of something extra and turned into a jeweller's shop.

"Could you kindly take the hooks off this and put it on a safety-pin?" I did not know the shopman, but he evidently knew me.

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"Ah, the General's crossed swords," he observed, contemplating the badge.

"Certainly, madam. I'll do it for you within an hour, and you'll excuse me saying it, but we all feel it's a bad day for Harmouth that *he's* going. My son in the Redoubt, he looked in last night and he says, 'I wish we was all going along with him,' he says. 'But never mind, just let *him* get out to France and *he'll* soon tidy up them Germans, whoever else can't,' he says." I had to hurry out of the shop lest I should use my handkerchief. Well I knew it would take more than many of our best to tidy the Germans, yet I loved to hear the words.

Through all those days ran the new horror which made everything uncertain. Should we ever have a home again? Wherever I went one thing was clear—husband and son would not be with me—not for a long, long time. Then I began to think I might be able to go to France and help in a Base Hospital, and this hope

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helped me over the winding up. I knew I had no longer the strength to nurse, as I had done in the South African war, but I thought I could help the Chaplain with the care of the bad cases, write the letters, watch by the dying, pray for the unconscious. I had done a great deal of that before we came to Harmouth, in a big Workhouse Infirmary at North Shields, and before that again in hospitals abroad. It would be an enormous comfort if I might get such work again, and to be in France would be worth almost anything.

. . . . . .

Our last day has come. Chris has put on his new plain khaki, and met the new General who has arrived to take over, in glittering oak-leaved cap and beautiful new scarlet tabs. Did I like it? Not a bit. I could have shot the new man at sight. Now I want to hurry and get away, and at last it is time to go by the afternoon train down to the Howitzer Brigade at Southam, waiting for its

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ammunition. There is one comfort, we are going to live together again under one roof until that ammunition does come, and the biggest man in Harmouth goes with me.

But let me not swell overmuch with pride in one man, although my own. Among the men who came round the carriage door to say good-bye were other splendid giants. The man who had left the rule of a province six times the size of England to do the "common or garden" drudgery of transport and commissariat for the new army—he was there, still doing it, though the hoped-for fighting, and attack from the sea, had melted into mist. He had a horrid little lodging and a dark and chillsome office; the work was dull and often nasty, for there is no jam in catching out contractors who are making on the war; but he had been given this bit to do, and he meant to go on doing it. Yes, he was a giant, so was Sir Henry, the splendid old Colonel, fit to be a General

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anywhere, but retired long since on account of his wounds. He had come back, come to do any mortal job that wanted doing, so long as he might be employed by the King and not asked to stay in comfort in his own country house, while the army suffered. And *his* work was not a bit congenial or exciting either, and the damp fogs of the East Coast were playing mischief with his stiffened limb. It cannot have been easy for Sir Henry to see the younger man go off, and they had been good friends together.

"I think he's right to go, you know, I *think* he's right," said the kind old man in my ear.

"You would have done the same if you could," said I, with some difficulty in my throat. "Good-bye, good-bye." The page of Harmouth was turned over.

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SOUTHAM.

"LET no man think that sudden in a minute all is accomplished and the work is done."

We went to Southam to join the Brigade of guns, waiting there for embarkation, and expecting to be off in a few days. We had engaged a lodging without seeing it, and thought anything would do just for that short time. But we were there for ten weeks, ten weeks of summer weather, living in dirty, baking hot rooms facing a glaring noisy tramway. Our landlady didn't care about heroes or Lieutenant-Colonels either; she was a person of ample figure and strikingly low-cut blouses; it was left to her to make or mar Chris's comfort in those last long-drawn days in England, and she marred them without a pang.

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She was so slovenly, we could not even achieve decent enough meals to ask the young officers to dinner. The weather turned very hot, the ammunition still lingered, our dusty sitting-room faced the sun all day, and an excruciatingly noisy tram changed its points just under our windows from early morning until nearly midnight. I clung to the poetry of self-sacrifice but the prose was tiresome to a degree. My plan for work in France was cut and dried, but I could not start until Chris did.

Then a telegram came. I sent in hot haste to the Fort for Chris and his car, and we had just an hour to get to Southampton and have a moment with Garry before he embarked. Parents have been parting with their only sons every hour of every day since the war began. I suppose quite a number of them care for their boy as much as we do. What is the use of writing about it? One would not keep them at home, one sends them proudly to

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the thickest spot in the fight, and I daresay half the mothers notice just what I did, that their subaltern son has suddenly aged and become a man apart, whose thoughts are hidden from them. Our boy had been in charge of a big draft, had not been to bed since the night before last, and had just done a long hot railway journey; his eyes looked deadly tired, but he was as spotless and quiet as if he were starting for Church Parade; he did not say much; what he did say was about his men, and very soon he said he must go back to them. "They took some looking after; good fellows, but very young and a bit careless." I listened and marvelled and repeated to myself, "His men—very young and careless." Why, who on earth could have been *more* young and careless than himself just a few months before? But this was a man I was looking at now—and a man who had just parted from his bride.

He said good-bye to his father in the hotel —but I could not do that. I walked to the

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Dock gate and there we kissed each other and smiled and parted quickly. Not a tear. No ocean of tears could have matched the pain, so far better to keep dry eyed. Chris and I went back in the car almost without speaking, but we did make one comment and found we felt alike.

"We can't expect to see him come home —he may of course—but we can't *expect* it; other people give their only sons, and it doesn't seem right to want him to be safer than the others."

"I know," said his father, "that's why somehow I can't even pray for it."

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STARTING AT NETLEY.

THE ammunition still delayed, but Chris was at work all day long, pretending the Brigade was in France; taking out the guns, finding good hiding-places for them, practising the men in field cookery and long marches, teaching the officers how to observe, and the drill book only knows what.

One vacant day I came over to Netley to find a Nursing Sister I had known years ago. She had gone to France, I found, like all the rest of my world, but I met a Sister at the station who showed me the side path to the hospital, and as we walked along together I told her what I was hoping to do shortly at Havre or Boulogne.

"Don't go to France, come and do it here," she said. "France can't want that

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sort of help more than Netley does. We have crowds of men who never have a prayer said beside them—men with fractured spines who will never get up again—men waiting to have limbs amputated—dying men without any mothers or wives to come and sit by them. *Do* come to Netley."

She was so hot upon it and so persuasive that I began to think she might be right. Chris was not very keen on my going to France, he thought I should kill myself, and he would probably think Netley an easier business with less dangerous surroundings; but I badly wanted to be across the Channel, if only until the children's summer holidays. Sister Little did not stint trouble. She took me along a miniature town of grey tin huts—grown up like mushrooms on a lovely bit of common behind the old Victorian Hospital—and showed me first one hut and then another. There were hanging wreaths of pink and white dog-roses in tangled bloom all about

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the common, and great splashes of golden gorse; the trees were in the first freshness of early June, and shining and glittering down below lay the broad expanse of Southampton water. An absolutely perfect place, I thought it. The huts might be made of grey iron, but they were beautifully arranged. The wide doors had a sloping step so that beds could be pushed outside, and there were many of the men lying out under awnings, basking in the afternoon sun, who in an ordinary hospital must have lain indoors for weeks longer.

"That is the Officers' Hut," said the Sister, and behold a rose garden—rather a young rose garden—but quite good; little trees full of bloom set in nice green turf like the Queen's garden in 'Alice' and in and out between the borders—white beds and green deck chairs under gay Japanese umbrellas. I had never conceived such ideal surroundings for wounded men. The huts were named after the counties who had given them—Westmoreland Hut, Essex Hut, and

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so on. Inside, the walls were shining and white, with rows of windows framed in pretty self-coloured short sun curtains; each hut had its own shade of colour. I went into one where bedspreads, curtains, and the prevailing colour of the beautifully arranged flowers was all lilac; another was entirely blue cornflower.

"Come and speak for a moment to a special man of mine," said the Sister—"Sergeant McClintock—he is such a splendid great fellow and was a famous football player in Scotland. His spine is fractured by a shell—a hopeless case. His mother is with him now—that little old body in black."

I was afraid of intruding, but Sister took me up to the pretty bed where a fine drawn head lay wearily against the pillows, and the mother and son were very polite and kind to me as we talked together for a few minutes.

Then the Sister had some little thing to do for her patient, and the sweet-faced

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old woman and I went outside for a moment.

She told me quietly that he could never get better.

"Fine I know it," she said in her pretty Scotch, but when I took the liberty of praising her bravery to her face, she turned to me with a dignity I can see as I write.

"I'd tak' it shame to greet an' so mony mourning," she said simply. Yet she was a widow, and he was her only son.

. . . . . .

The great turquoise-tinted dome rising above the massive brick pile of the main hospital held my eye as I turned to leave the huts.

"This place is like a great Temple of Pain," I said, looking at it, as I turned to thank Sister Little for showing me so much.

"Well, it's rather a heathen temple," she replied with decision, "and you had better come, if only for a week or two, and you will see for yourself."

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"I should have to get the Chaplain's leave first," I demurred.

"Come to his office just inside the first entrance of the big hospital to-morrow at ten, and I'll introduce you to him. He will take you on, no question about that; only, once you get into his clutches down there, you will never find time to come to my men in the Red Cross. I know just how it will be."

I vowed *that* should not come true at any rate, and went back to Southam thinking hard.

Chris met my train and echoed the Sister's wishes with unusual emphasis. He much preferred the idea of my working at Netley, thought his shells might still not be ready for some weeks, and I could go every morning and come back for tea, as long as he was kept waiting at Southam.

So it began. So it fell out that I got the first essential in life: "work I felt fitted for."

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I did see the Chaplain, he did take me on, and scouted the idea of France needing my kind of work as much as Netley did. But the Sister was right. I tried to get to her huts as well as to the huge wards in the main building, but I soon found it was a physical impossibility.

It was nervous work at first—I was terrified of being an intruder, a nuisance to the men and a worry to the Sisters. The Matron warned me, on my introduction to her, that many religious visitors had been a dead failure in the wards.

"They frighten the men and send up their temperatures. The last woman who asked leave to come and read the Bible to the men, was a regular terror, and I, myself, turned her out of the hospital."

Not encouraging; but as I walked down the long, long corridors and saw ward after ward crammed with wounded, I thought there must be some one who wanted his letters written, some one who wanted a cigarette, some one who wanted a novel,

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and I could begin with that. And so I did, and kind Sister Moxon showed me where to go and helped me from the first day.

Presently, almost at once, I found unending work, and in a few weeks' time, when Chris got his long-delayed ammunition and the troop-train carried him away to the docks, I don't know how I could have borne any less satisfying life than had begun to absorb me at Netley.

I found tiny lodgings close to the hospital, clean and airy and facing a nice wild gorse and bramble bit of common. By nine o'clock every morning I was learning my way to "Top Floor Surgical" with its quarter mile of wards and bunks, staircases and lifts, "Second Floor Medical" and "Ground Floor" convalescents, and the labyrinth of offices, dining-halls, theatre, Sisters' Quarters, Sick Officers' Quarters, Enquiry Room, Mortuary, Post Office, and Church.

As I pass along I learn, among many

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things, a new grading for social position. Your standing at Netley is not determined by chance facts such as your birth, brains, or looks. These things, being unearned, carry no credit here.

But if you have had both legs amputated you will receive deep respect, and if you have had some seventeen shrapnel wounds —and I meet men here who have had that, and more—and if they are all deep enough to require the insertion of tubes before they heal—*then* you will be called a *Proper Hedgehog* and treated as a duke.

You will also get special deference if you have somehow evaded regulations and not only enlisted, but also achieved a wound, before you reached the age of eighteen.

. . . . . .

This journal I have found among my papers five years after the war ended. I remember very well the reason why I could not go on with it. The work became more and more pressing at Netley; I could put down nothing there, except the names of

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my men, the addresses of their people, the books or food they wanted, the day they died, and, if I could possibly attend them, the hour for their funerals.

After I left Netley I lost all power of writing about it. Simply it could not be done. But out of the great multitude of faces, constantly remembered, certain ones stayed always in my mind, and I cannot bear them to be forgotten. Therefore I have written from memory, but I believe with fair accuracy, the stories which follow.

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PUMFORD FROM THE DARDANELLES.

I SEE a long hospital corridor lined with beds. Netley was so crammed with desperate cases from the Dardanelles just then that the wards could not hold them all, and extra beds were ranged in long unbroken lines under the corridor windows.

The men did better there, for the salt breezes blew in off the Solent, and when pillows were raised it was soothing to watch the ships pass up and down on their lawful occasions—troopship and destroyer, armed merchantman and fishing smack, and, lovely queens of all, the great white hospital ships with their myriad emerald lights twinkling and reflecting as they passed in at night to Southampton docks.

It was difficult to get along that corridor. Every bed held a hero and more interesting

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talk was to be had than one could often hope to find again; but just to-day I will recall one man only, and he was too ill for the corridor, so he had been put into a small private ward, opening out of it.

I fancy that Private Pumford can hardly have expected great things from life. A miner, working under-ground from the day he was fourteen until the day when—nearly thirty—he joined the army for the war. A drinking, swearing, loose-living fellow, son of drinking, swearing rough-living parents. I fancy that when Pumford had done his long day in the bowels of the earth, hacking out great blocks of coal, and when he came wearily slouching home for his food, he often found his mother snoring beside the cold ashes of a filthy kitchen grate, and nothing ready—or quarrelling vilely in the public-house close by. Not much grace or beauty of life for Pumford.

But war came, and when you have said its fearful worst of war, this remains to its credit—it did certainly smash some "sorry

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schemes of things entire." If your parents were difficult, war took you away from them; if your work was a tread-mill of mechanical drudgery, war lifted you clean out of it; if you longed for excitement—real, burning, thrilling life—war gave it to you with full measure. War brought Pumford up into daylight for good, war cleaned up Pumford in barracks, war took him away from his hovel of a home and presently put him out of reach of the public-house, the grimy street, the blackened earth. Pumford found himself on a ship, and for a few days did really see some of the beauty of the world. Some marvels of sunrise and sunset, moonlight, and star-shine in velvet skies, as they passed down the coasts of Portugal and Spain; some glimpse of the towering great rock Gibraltar, some sunny, peaceful days on deck as the troopship steadily cut her way through the blue Mediterranean.

No more. Only that. A morning came when they left the great ship, and rowed

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in boats through a silent stretch of pearl and opal sea, towards a quiet open beach. Before five minutes had passed, rifle bullets ripped the water in thousands; the dead, the wounded and the dying lined the shore —and the war began and ended for Pumford. Don't speak about the return voyage for the wounded; the amputations done on crowded decks, the vain attempt to get the worst cases left at Alexandria. There was no room for them—no room anywhere for all the anguish of the Dardanelles. The men had to bear the voyage home or die of it. Pumford is one of hundreds in Netley that day who just managed to live to get home, and that was all. It is not a complete Pumford that has managed it; one leg is gone, and one eye, and a piece of spine is wrecked beyond repair. Operations don't do very well, to use the nurses' phrase, which have been performed under crowded conditions, or on patients whose lives have not been cleanly lived. Pumford cannot heal; his outraged flesh rebels

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against the surgeon and revolts the senses of those around.

"Put him in a ward by himself," is the order, and here is the ward: it has a fireplace, and a gas jet, but otherwise rather resembles a linen cupboard, for it has no outlook, except into the corridor, and very little daylight reaches Pumford for the use of his one remaining eye. There is nothing on the drab painted walls to relieve their monotony and it has struck me that a big picture of "The White Comrade," which has just been sent to me, might hang opposite the bed. So I get an orderly, and we put it up, and the one poor eye watches us doubtfully. Pumford is not a man of many words, and when I remarked cheerfully:—

"You'll like a picture here, Pumford; it will be company for you."

"Ho" is my only answer.

"I brought some roses for you this morning—they will look nice on the shelf under the picture, won't they?"

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"Ho."

"And what about your dinner to-day? Do you want any extras out of my basket?"

"You show me what yer've got." Whereupon I display some sausages, some fresh eggs, and a choice little meat jelly decorated with tomato and green peas. Pumford eyes them and turns to me with firmness:

"Non o' that there, Sister; I cud fancy a bit o' fried liver—*calf's* liver, mind, nuthin' else."

I make a rapid review of my day's work, remember that I shall have to go home sometime and pass near a butcher's shop, and fancy the Divisional Sister, who is an angel, might fry the horrid stuff on her private stove—so I can answer cheerfully, "Very well. You can't have it by dinner-time, but it shall be here for tea."

I have to pass on then to the other men on my list. The Dangerous List written up in the Chaplain's room, which changes every day and often several times a day.

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How the names and faces come back to me as I write—how I see the long wards one after another and feel again how my heart thumps when I come to the bed I want and see the red screen marking it off from the rest. The screens were never put very early at Netley—they generally meant the last day had come—and almost all my work was behind the screens.

People who never did it, think it must have been so terrible, but it was never terrible to me. It is not terrible to do little things for those you deeply love in their hour of mortal weakness ; the terrible thing is to know that nothing was done.

At Netley it was every one's glory and utmost joy to do everything possible ; the surgeons did, day and night, the Matron, the sisters, the V.A.D.'s, the orderlies—it was the most splendid fellowship of effort I ever saw. Dear gallant little Matron, I can see her now, so trim, so competent, she could have ruled a kingdom. Where every nurse looked spotless, Matron looked

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unspotable; where every uniform fitted, you could tell hers fifty yards away—she looked as if she had been poured into it. Where others looked haggard, pale, overdone, Matron, even after midnight, was serene, pink-cheeked, and fresh as dawn. Perhaps I should confess that those pink cheeks puzzled me, until one hot summer night when I was watching the last hour of a Munster Fusilier, Matron's figure passed suddenly between the screens to lower a tiresome light. As she bent down to feel the ebbing pulse I saw to my amazement that the cheek turned towards me was hollow, grey, and lined like an old woman, while the other cheek was pink and smooth as usual. I never expected to admire rouge, but it was most admirable in Matron. I cannot think it was ever put to a nobler use, for it cheered the entire hospital and disguised to the last that she had overworked herself—not to death as she would have preferred—but to be an invalid for the rest of her life.

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The days and nights go swiftly by. I only see Pumford for a few minutes each day, the other cases are more urgent, and as I pass to and fro he generally seems to be asleep—but we have a morning ritual which always precedes the vital topic of the fried liver, or finnan haddock, or other highly flavoured morsel which his fancy covets as an extra for his tea.

"Well, my son, how are you to-day? Pretty fair?"

"Aye, Sister."

"Said your prayers yet?"

"No, Sister."

"Will you say them with me then?"

"Aye, Sister."

And we say them together—just a few sentences—very slow and very quiet. . . . But one afternoon I pass down the corridor, horribly tired and shaky, and Pumford cheers me up.

"Sister," comes the slow, deliberate voice. "You knows that there picture a-hanging on the wall? Well, I wants t'

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speak t' yer about that picture." A long pause.

"Well, Pumford?"

"Well, Sister, when you hanged that there picture up, I know'd that picture were s'posed to be the Lord-in-Heaven, ain't it?"

"Yes."

"Well, I didn't believe there *was* no Lord-in-Heaven. So I nivver said nuthin' 'bout it. But I've a-laid here these three week, an' I've looked at 'Im an' looked at 'Im, under the gas o' nights an' all through the day, and what I wants t' say to yer, Sister, I says now"—his slow voice lifted suddenly with emphasis—"I believes *now* there *be* a Lord-in-Heaven, an' 'E's bin a-lookin' after me in this 'ere room. An' wot I wants t' ask yer, Sister, *is* —If so be as I gives yer all my pay since I come to 'ospital, can I take that there picture of the Lord-in-Heaven back along with me wen I goes home?"

. . . . . .

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You see he had no idea yet that he was dying. I cannot recall any of my men thinking that, until the end was very near; when that knowledge came, a complete acquiescence seemed always to come with it.

A few days later, Pumford seemed to be weakening, and I came in several times before he was wakeful enough to want any conversation beyond "Don't go 'way, Sister, I ain't sleepin'." But after his tea he brightened a while, and I suggested, knowing the time was short, that I should write a letter to his mother. She had been to see him, some weeks before, but I knew nothing of her beyond the fact that she had not wished to be sent for again. So I produced paper and pen and said:

"I am ready now, Pumford, what shall I say?"

But there appeared to be nothing Pumford wanted to say. He eyed me doubtfully with his one mournful eye and merely shook his head. So I sat and

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waited while apparently he dozed, until a sudden remark came.

"Better read 'er letter first," and under his directions I searched in the locker and produced a grimy sheet.

"You read it out loud, Sister" he directed, and this is what I read:—

"My dear Albert Edward, You make haste and come home. I got in a barrel of beer and we can get drunk all day: from your aff^te^ Mother." I laid down the paper in silence and Pumford's eye contemplated me with severity. Certainly I had never read any mother's letter in the least like it, but certainly I did not wish to be defeated. So I remarked, after a slight pause:—

"She means it kindly, Pumford. She wants to share the beer. I will begin:—

"My dear Mother, I hope you are pretty well. I am not very grand but I sleep a good deal"—"Is there anything you want to say, or shall I just thank her for her letter and say you send your love?"

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But Pumford would have none of my useless compromises.

"You tell 'er," he directed firmly, "You tell 'er, I be a changed man, and there ain't no more beer-drinkin' for me. If ivver I comes home, I be goin' t' live different. That's all you got to tell 'er, Sister." The one eye closed wearily as I finished and folded the letter; the evening light was getting dim in the little shut-away ward but you could see the Figure in the picture and we said our prayer together before I went away:—

"Accept, O Lord, we beseech Thee, the great pain and sacrifice made by Thy servant for Thee and for his country. Forgive him all his sins and grant him strength to follow Thee to the end."

Something like that, almost exactly that, the words were. A few more, when the end was very near—but never many. Their faces, their tortured bodies, were all prayers, following the way of the Crucified; following on, following on. Who

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was I, to dare to put words to such pain, such sacrifice as theirs? I, who had fared softly all my days, who had never given up all, and never followed in this wise, to mutilation, to the slow corruption of the body before death had delivered me from its bondage.

Not many days later Pumford reached the goal, softly in his sleep. He had had a dream he said, that afternoon, when he roused a little for the last time. Such a grand dream he was anxious to sleep again and get back to it.

"What did you dream about, Pumford?"

He smiled slowly, a smile of great content. "Sister, I were walkin' in green fields. Beautiful fields they was. An' a Friend seem to be along with me—a very good Friend"—he murmured again, and then Pumford slept.

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PRIVATE CHILD.

It was most curious that Tommy Child was truly his name—for he looked an absolute child—fifteen you would say at most—and also he was a Tommy—a genuine private in a line regiment.

As the men said, "You put that in a book, Sister, and nobody wouldn't never believe it." But I *shall* put it in a book because it is a fact, and also because I cannot bear the thought of Tommy Child being forgotten.

It is five years since I knew him, just for three quick passing days, and he was only one in a crowd then. I was not with him beyond a few hours. I spent far longer days with literally hundreds of other men, whose brave pale faces have grown dim and confused in my remembrance.

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But I can see Tommy Child as vividly to-night as if his thin, eager little face were opposite me still. In sober truth there have been few days in the five years when I have not seen him. If I had known him every hour of his short life, I doubt if I had known him better or loved him more.

He had been a farm boy, down in Dorsetshire, and he had just left the village school and started to earn. How should the war have caught hold of such a quiet little country fellow as that? It was the time of posters. Great placards staring you in the face wherever you went. In London that was natural—"Your country needs you. Join at once;" the words shouted at you from every taxi, door, and wall. But it seemed more striking and urgent still when the big printed letters sprang out at you down peaceful country roads. Tommy saw them, freshly pasted on a tree-trunk near the farm. The words worried him all up the lane, as he carried the pig bucket along to the old

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shed where the sow lived. When he reached the sty, the same insistent order stretched red and blue across the door. That settled Tommy—it must be meant for him—no one else had work in that shed.

How he got away to the recruiting office, how his age was never questioned, how he ever said good-bye to his poor mother, one can only guess. But this is certain; he joined the army, he did a hurried training, and in a very short time, long before he was sixteen, Tommy had fought on "Q" beach in Gallipoli; fought, and fallen, desperately wounded in the stomach; and through the same stress of crowded ship and hopeless operation as Pumford and a thousand more, here lay the child, obviously dying, in a ward at Netley. Used to every kind of wound as we all were then, yet every heart melted over this brave little skeleton of a face and frame.

"Proper crool, ain't it, Sister," the men

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would mutter down the line of beds. "Downright baby murder, I calls it." But they did not speak aloud for him to guess their pity. "Old man" and "Comrade" were the names they called to him across the wide, bare ward. Their pride in him was a lovely thing to see, and Tommy must have felt it though he said nothing—only smiled—and then was very sick, and then said, "Thank you, Sister," and smiled again.

"Why has Child's mother not come yet?" demands Sister Moxon, as she stops a moment by his bed. And this is my question also.

"Two telegrams went yesterday, Sister, and one the day before, but no answer." Sister passes down the ward, but inadvertently her comment reaches through the screen. Not a closed screen yet, but one sadly ready to seclude the bed at any moment.

"I have no patience with these women. Telegraph and pay the journeys, and they

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won't even bother to answer. They don't care half as much for their boys as we do."

Sudden energy comes to the weak voice, Tommy calls out shrill and high :—

"My mother ain't like that, Sister. She've bin hindered, my mother have; her'll come fast 'nuff presently."

Of course, we tell him, she will be here directly, very likely the trains were wrong. And we are ashamed before the child. But almost as we spoke a woman stood at the door, hesitating, as she saw the long lines of bandaged men. A country woman in decent black, and as I hurry to her, she says in breathless haste :—

"I'm Child's mother, Nurse, is 'e very bad? I were away to my daughter's; t'was her confinement, an' I never got the talygrams, is 'e better?"

Don't look at them as they meet; try not to hear her sob; close the screen for a few minutes, and pretend to be busy at the far end of the ward. There are plenty of men there, at other times, only too thankful

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for a chat, but, just at this moment, no one wants to speak. I dare not go away, for Tommy is sure to have his sickness back in a minute or two, and how will his mother stand the hæmorrhage that always comes with it? Tommy settles this for himself, his thin little pipe reaches me.

"Sister!" and I am with him, ready with the basins—but he keeps a grip on himself still.

"Sister, you git mother away a bit."

"To be sure. She shall have a cup of tea after her journey," and Mrs. Child goes meekly away with a kind V.A.D. eager to look after her.

Tommy looks up, wise as the oldest. "'Tis too 'ard for mothers," he whispers brokenly, the rending sickness beginning to choke him. "You an' me, Sister, can stick it far best."

I have him on my arm—what there is left of him—the sickness tears and strangles, longer than usual—at last, at last, I can wipe the brave lips and lay him back.

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"Poor darling son, that *was* a bad go, wasn't it?"

His eyes opened clear, one brave glance he gave me, even as he spoke he died.

"Nivver mind, Sister. Not so bad as it looked."

That was five years ago, Tommy, and now I live in Oxford, where men spend all their years in study and learning; in reading books which took all the years and study of the men who lived before them.

They will scarcely know more than you did when they come to the end of it. Will God think they knew as much?

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DAVIS AND LOUIE.

A THOUSAND times I have tried to write about Netley—but words would not come. The faces come before me, a countless host of faces, all pale, all young, and yes, I declare it, all beautiful. Some of them shine out from the rest—Pumford, with his one solemn eye; Child, so boyish and eager; Skeggs, with his look of suppressed pain that was so intense—he seemed like a crucifix in the ward; Sulliver, wasted to the bone, but keeping his Cockney air of knowingness to the last.

And behind them, come row after row, hundreds and hundreds of a martyr throng, and I seem to hear them speaking, half amused, yet always kind. "Surely you've not forgotten *me*, Sister, with both my legs shot off?"—"Me, who came from New Zealand to fight, and died in that corner

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bed when you was along with me?"—"Me, you was so fond of, that lay in the Dysentery ward? You know we all died in there, one after t'other."

"Davis, Sister, you remember *Davis?* why you fair broke your heart over Davis, Sister. Don't you remember how bad I wanted my girl, and how you sent for her, and how you got champagne out of the doctors to keep me up till she came? 'Just one sip, my son,' you kep' on saying. 'Your girl's comin' directly.' And I couldn't keep up, couldn't wait, couldn't open my eyes no more. And Louie, poor girl, she came at last, so pretty and so lovin', same as she always were; I must have looked an awful sight, shrapnel in my face, and legs gone, leavin' a queer hollow in th' bed, and wounds smellin' somethin' shockin'. But she come between the screens so fast, and kneels down and lays her cheek 'gainst mine.

"'Will,' she says, 'Will! It's Louie. Louie's come!'

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"I heard her all right, Sister, but I'd slip too far out o' my pore smash-up body to open my eyes or speak. Wasn't she a proper picture, Sister! How she did keep kneelin' there, hours an' hours. She wouldn't move to get her cup o' tea, you had to bring it to her and put it on the floor. Said the prayers with you out aloud, Sister, didn't she? an' you had to get her a little chair so she needn' leave go of me hand.

"'Twas night at last, wasn't it? an' very late an' wet, you could hear the rain against the winders. A genelman comes and looks over the screen a minute, and he says his car's just goin' down your road and it's no use your stayin' any longer. Not a mite of notice you didn't take, not a mite. Louie, she goes on strokin' my fingers all the time, an' she starts talkin' to you, very soft.

"'We've kept company ever since we went to school, Nurse,' she says, 'down in Cornwall. Will hadn't any parents; he

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worked in the mines and lodged with my married sister. We were always sweethearts; when he joined up for the war I wanted him to marry me first, but Will didn't think that right. A lot of rough girls were doing that, he said, just to get the money. They used to laugh at me in the village and say I was a proper old wife before ever I was married, because I always did Will's washing and mended all his clothes. I've often felt sorry for young ladies; they can't do half those nice things for their young men. And Will is a grand letter writer. Why I've more than a hundred letters he's sent me since he joined the army, and ever so many from the Dardanelles!'

"And then she showed you my photo, Sister, don't you remember? hanging in a little locket inside her blouse. You didn't say it, not to her, but you couldn't tell 'twas me, could you? Quite a handsome young fellow it was. Not the face you knew—six months afterwards. An' the

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time went on and on; it'd be nearly one when Matron and the Night Sister comes softly down the ward. Very stately the Matron was, and passed along on the rounds like a queen. She comes inside the screens and looks at me, very quiet, and whispers Louie that she's a brave girl, and there won't be any more pain now. And she gives a little smile at you and says, 'Still here?' And then she touched my wrist a minute, and I felt her pray. You remember it all now, don't you, Sister?"

Yes, I remember it all now. I am not really writing in my little room at Oxford —my fingers hold the pen and my body is in the chair, but I, the real lasting soul and stuff of me, am still with brave Louie. We are passing through the wood to the cemetery now, following the gun carriage. It is such a lovely wood; beech trees in their autumn gold, and slender birch; bronzed bracken standing high, and the quiet blue of the sea shining in wide stretches of still waters beyond. So softly

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the mules step along the leaf-strewn path; the flag over the coffin very white in the sunshine—the steel of the helmet flashing star-like before we pass into the shadow.

It was Dr. Pusey, learned, iron-willed, who confessed to a friend that he could never pass a certain part of Christ Church without seeing the flutter of his wife's pall as the breeze lifted it from the coffin in front of him.

And I, when I see autumn beeches shedding their glory, must always see just such lovely leaves falling like golden tears on Davis's Union Jack.

Louie holds my hand tight, and gazes across the countless wooden crosses by the heather-covered graves. She had looked for a joyful home-coming, a pretty wedding with their friends thronging to see it, a little house of their own, and all things warm with happiness, and God had sent her this. She cannot understand it, but yet I think she dare not wish it different.

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Triumphant Over Pain

It is all too great for tears. Wounds and suffering, sorrow and the lonely future, all shrink small. The bugle rings out shrill and clear for Davis' Last Post. Death is swallowed up in victory. Salute!

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"THE HARVEST FESTIVAL."

THE time of Harvest Festivals has come. War is still reaping its thousands right across Europe, and here we only gather in the fallen men. Yet the Sisters, literally worked to death as they are becoming, have snatched an hour to deck our chapel with sheaves of corn, and great purple bunches of grapes and scarlet trails of creeper.

It has come to the men's ears that there will be an anthem. Suddenly they all want to come and hear it, and the centre aisle is crowded with extra seats and spinal chairs pushed in by convalescents: we are used to pews filled with bandaged and crippled men, but these long chairs hold men who are motionless, and seldom leave their wards. They are spinal wounds. "The Broken Backs" in hospital language; they will never stand upright again.

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The cheerful gaslight shines on a wonderfully attentive congregation, and the strength and volume of the singing is tremendous.

"The valleys stand so thick with corn that they shall laugh and sing . . . laugh and sing . . . laugh and sing" . . . repeat the tenors and the basses. "They shall laugh and sing," declares a soaring treble, lifting his notes with delight, and the men's upturned faces are enraptured—they would all laugh and sing if decorum allowed, and let wounds and blindness and missing limbs be clean forgotten. For we are not always sad at Netley; more often we are cheery as larks and probably for the same reason. We have flown upwards.

But the preacher is a stranger to us, and when he goes into the pulpit the sight of his congregation seems to move him. We are still ploughing the fields and scattering in the good old noisy hymn, and enjoying it immensely. Even when we have shouted

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for the last time that "all good gifts around us are sent from Heaven above," and have settled down expectantly to listen to the sermon, the preacher still stands silently looking at us, and seems to swallow down something in his throat when he leans forward at last and speaks:—

"Before I give out my text—let me say one word. Let no man here think that I dare to preach to him. It is *you* who preach to me." He had to pause again a moment before the text could be said. "In everything give thanks."

In a flash I see other congregations listening to that text and being given long lists of their blessings—health, homes, busy, cheering work, love of husband and wife, parent and child—not a tithe of our blessings were ever counted up. But what will make the everything for Netley's gratitude? Broken bodies, never fit for much work again even if they evade death, cut off from home, very few ever fit to marry or have the pride of little sons. What will the

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preacher make of this? He went straight to our private difficulty and spoke about pain. Why did God allow it? What good was it? I had found my own answer to those questions in Private Pumford, Tommy Child, and a hundred others—and my mind slipped away to them until I heard, "You are filling up the measure of the sufferings of Christ." . . . After that the essence of the sermon glued itself into my brain. In effect the preacher said this: "A big measure of pain, poured out, as it were, into a great piled-up heap, was absolutely necessary for the salvation of sinful earth, and Christ had taken away and borne in His own Body the greater portion of it." As he drew his picture, my mind answered back.

"Yes—and here and now. Not only a cruel death at last, but wounds and dysentery on a blazing shadeless beach, with the same bitter cry, 'I thirst.' Not only the torment of the stretchers, the dragging hours of the torturing rough

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voyage; but loneliness at the end, and the love in far Australia or Canada unable to reach. . . . Very like Christ."

And I hear the preacher giving his conclusion. "Those who suffer most do most for the world after all—they fill up the measure."

I think I will run up to the top corridor and tell Sulliver about this. Sulliver shot to pieces, who has outlived so many visits to the operation table that every fresh surgeon is brought to see him as the marvel of the wards. He will die in the end, but by every known law he should have died six months ago, yet is still here, still talking, still keenly interested in all that goes on.

Yes, I *must* tell Sulliver about that piled-up heap of pain, and the big piece he has taken away from it—and it is late, so I try to edge my way through the crowded aisle. A fat and tiresome orderly, with a convenient squint to keep him safe in England, blocks my path. I stay just one second to

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speak to him because it is certainly a sign of grace that Smith should attend chapel, and he had better be encouraged.

"A very fine sermon, Orderly."

"Yes, madam. I were very pleased. The likes of him not bein' fit to speak to the likes of us! Very true and proper I thought that was."

Netley is not all sorrow. I laughed the whole way up the six flights of stairs.

. . . . . .

Sulliver is lying quiet but wide awake, and I tell him all I can. He listens, keenly interested, but when I wind up by saying,

"So you see, Sulliver, when you get to the Heavenly Places, you will be ever so high up, and if I come creeping in lower down, you will be too grand to speak to me!" He believes me so literally that he suddenly grasps my arm and answers shrilly:—

"I *woant* then. No, I *woant*—I'll call out to yer, an' I'll say, ''Ow are yer, my dear Mrs. Atkins? take a bit o' rest, *do!*'"

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SULLIVER.

WHAT can you expect of an undersized, wizen-faced boy of nineteen who has spent his days in yelling "Fish" from a filthy barrow in Whitechapel? How are you going to turn him in three months into a smart and invincible infantry soldier, willing to face the trenches and the German army, or die in the attempt? Ask the sergeants of the Training Camps; they did it out of just such material to the tune of ten thousand times ten thousand. But I will admit that the quantity of courage drilled and rammed into Sulliver was inadequate to the demands of the hideous wounds which rewarded his efforts to satisfy his regiment.

By the time he got to the corner bed in B. Surgical Division, Netley, Sulliver considered he had "had enuf of it." He

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struggled with his nurses, tried to bite the orderly, and began to scream directly the surgeon came down the ward to do his dressing. "A fair terror" the other men called him, disgusted at such un-British behaviour and their sympathy ran short.

"Dry up, can't yer?" says one.

"You stop that row or I'll give you what for," comes in a deep growl from the adjoining bed.

And the men are justified; there are two in the ward who have the last screens round them, and they all feel a decent silence to be due to those secluded beds, let the probings and forceps rack the rest of them in turn as they will.

The result of these daily commotions could only be one.

"Increase the morphia, Sister."

So Sulliver lies very quiet, and since we know he can never recover, we hope it will not be long. But it is very long: days and weeks; and the drug loses its power.

I am emboldened one morning, having

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come to know the surgeon, to break the rule of leaving the ward for the doctor's visits, unless I am behind a screen, and to meet him at the door.

"Just for once, let *me* stay and hold Sulliver while you dress him."

"Right," is the answer, and Sulliver grips and shivers and moans under his breath, but makes no fuss and earns a rare commendation.

"That's a good chap. You'll make a brave man yet."

Sister, when all is bandaged afresh and tidied up, and she can at last straighten out her stooping back, beckons to me a moment for a word in the corridor.

"Mrs. Atkins, did you *see* Sulliver's back?"

"No, I looked the other way."

"Well, *he has none.*" . . . And Sister's red cape goes steadily on to the next ward.

. . . . . .

Here is December, and I am still talking to Sulliver, grown strangely nicer and

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braver day by day, though the dressings take twice as long as they did a month ago. We have got on to the subject of Christmas, and he remarks :—

"My birfday comes afore that, Sister, twelf o' December, that is."

"Why, that is my birthday too! Sulliver, we'll share a cake!"

His pain is quite forgotten for fully five minutes—thank God for that—while we discuss the grandest cake we can have.

"Sponge cake, I think, Sulliver, because a currant would murder you, you know."

Sulliver saddens slightly. Obviously he had hoped for a black mass of currants and peel and raisins, oblivious of their inevitable result.

"But it must be a regular monster," I add quickly. "Big enough for eighteen men at least, and the doctors and two sisters and three nurses."

And Sulliver has so grown in grace that I really believe it is the thought of offering a slice of cake to the *doctor*—that almost

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God-in-man of a hospital—that makes him try to lift his head in delight.

"A cock-robing, Sister," he adds breathlessly. "I see 'em on cakes in a winder once. Somefin' grand they looks!"

"Certainly a cock robin," I agree, and presently I send an elaborately detailed order to a confectioner at Southam, who knows me, and will take pains, and be interested in my postscript: "This cake is for a soldier dying in hospital, and must be made exactly as wished, and delivered without fail on the 11th December."

But Sulliver is much worse before then, and Sister doubts if he will last. I am a fool; I hate the boy to suffer so terribly, I know he has "earned his crown" as the hymns say, and yet I want to keep him for his cake. Then I hold a whispered confabulation with Thompson, the man who is able to hop slowly about the ward and forget his missing leg while he gives dinner to the pal without an arm, or reads the paper to the sergeant with bandaged eyes.

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"When Sulliver wakes up, I want you to get a chat with him. Try to find out the thing he would like best in the world for a birthday present if he could get it, just as a sort of joke, I mean. Don't say anything about me."

"You leave it to me, Sister, I'll manage."

But when I come round in the afternoon Thompson looks defeated, and shakes his head at me.

"Not a bit o' use, Sister; 'e say 'e's wanted *a watch* mor'n anythin' else ever since 'e was a kid. So I says to 'im, 'Yer can't get *that* down 'ere, Sonny, an' wen you gits to 'Eaven,' I says, 'there won't be no time up there, an' yer won't want it.'"

Thompson looks at me, grieved that his mission is a failure; vexed that a little coster should have such high desires; certain that no nurse, as he believes me to be, could have money to gratify them.

But praise be to Mr. Longman and his comfortable November cheque. The birthday comes, and while Sulliver's shaking

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hands are still turning over a gun-metal watch with his name on it, the orderly unpacks and rests upon the table "Something *like* a cake," as the watching men observe.

It is huge; it is iced in Union Jack design; it has a dropsical robin on it; it has the French and English flags; it has an inscription: "Private Sulliver—Aged 20," in large letters, and beneath it, in quite small type, "And Mrs. Atkins—Aged 50."

. . . . . .

The birthday passes and Sulliver has not died. He gets a ray of pleasure when the men ask him the time, but when his wife comes to see him the watch causes trouble. For she wants to have it, and Sulliver is resolutely determined to keep it himself.

Such a wife! Perhaps they got married on a Bank Holiday just for a lark after Sulliver had joined the army. Perhaps they scarcely knew each other. In any case, it was my fault that she came down from Whitechapel to Netley, because I

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wired for her and paid her fare and lodging. I see her now, a fat, revolting, loud-voiced girl, always eating things out of a bag as she sat by her husband, who longed for solid food but could not have it. Making jokes with the other men: quite unintelligible jokes to me, and not too politely shared by the men who would growl in reply:—

"Dry up you!" as I came down the ward. . . .

She went back to Whitechapel and Sulliver was as relieved as I was.

But she returned! Not from any telegram of mine, but because the War Office had begun to issue free passes on the railway to relations of dangerously wounded men.

And every time Mrs. Sulliver made a trip to Netley she would try to get the watch, and every time Sulliver would be reduced to tears with anger and exhaustion, but would resolutely stick to his own.

In my impatience I sometimes almost

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wished the doctors would order the boy an overdose, and end it all, his dressings took so long and were so useless, and what mind could be left in him?

Mercifully he slept more, and gradually seemed to feel less pain, but it was spring before the release came at last. I had been so much with him, and watched his small sunken face grow smaller through so many days, that I might not have known when the last morning really came, if Sulliver had not known it himself. He had mind enough left for that—mind enough to know how to go through it.

As I came up and stood beside his bed he opened his eyes wide and gave me a faint grin, adding a nod of assent to the only prayer I could manage.

"O Christ! be with Thy brave son, and help him through this day."

There was a change in his face, an expression of calm completion.

He looked across at his wife sitting heavily beside him, and very slowly, very

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feebly, he tried to fumble under his pillow.

"What is it, Sulliver? Is it your watch you want?"

Yes. Sulliver wanted his watch. But not for himself, never anything more for himself. I put it in his hand, and with an effort he pushed it towards his wife: she grasped it eagerly, really pleased with him now, at any rate.

It was Sulliver's last push.

. . . . . .

The waste of war, the waste of life, the waste of pain. How much do we understand it? Had Sulliver lived seventy full years as a fish porter in Whitechapel would the result, the fully developed inner soul of him, have been finer?

"The last of life for which the first was made?"

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MOTHERS AND WIVES.

SOME of those wives at Netley puzzled me. I never ceased to be amazed at their inferiority to their husbands. Some splendid girls came to see their sweethearts, and some really noble mothers, but not one wife in three seemed to me to be worthy of her man. Perhaps the truth was that the army and the suffering had raised the men's level. Sulliver's wife, we scarcely counted a wife; obviously "Wanton" was her real name, but there were many others less easy to classify.

There was the wife of the sergeant with the crushed shoulder. He was in torture, and scarcely slept an hour in the week. His wife came, in answer to my wire, bringing her baby with her. She was neither ignorant nor poor, yet she brought

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no change of any garment for the child, nor night things for herself. I gave her everything, paid her expenses, paid a woman to look after the baby. She stayed a couple of days perhaps, then told me she was going home.

She did not care for the smell of the hospital, she said.

"But that is only the disinfectants, Mrs. Waters. It's a *clean* smell, it won't hurt you a bit. Perhaps you don't like seeing all the wounded men, but just think of the Sisters, and what *they* do!"

Mrs. Waters looked quite unmoved.

"The Sisters is paid for it, I suppose, M'm."

Paid for it! How do you pay pretty young women for their beauty and for their youth? And Netley took all the Sisters had, of both.

Tell me how you pay the Sisters for their strength, and nerve, and love. For toiling among dressings and putrefying wounds? For long hours in the operating

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theatre? For watching and fighting death from dawn until night, or through the lonely night until the dawn? For never losing patience and tenderness or the constant impulse to still do more, and never less?

And then, tell me also, how you pay the Sisters for ignoring their off-duty time, day after day and week after week. Not because the Matron asked it of them—very often it vexed her that they did it—but because they would not leave a dying man, because an amputation case had not come round from his anæsthetic, because the relations of a man who had died were late in arriving and it was better for them to hear the last details from the Sister.

Paid for it! My darling white-capped nursing Sisters! To be sure they are. Just as the angels are paid, and in the same way, and at the same time. But not in this world. Not in money. Not by man.

. . . . . .

But I did not say any of this to Mrs.

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Waters, my pearls were not for her piggy feet.

But I suppose that I said something, and I recall her next objection.

"She couldn't get on with the landlady at the lodgings." Very well, I would find other lodgings, very likely my own house. Then she supposed she *might* stop on; just for the week-end.

That evening my housemaid had an urgent telegram. Her young man had a week's leave from France. Could I possibly spare her until Monday, although cook was away for her holiday? It was a problem. I had never cooked a meal in my life, and though I might eat my dinner at the confectioners, I could not get nice enough meals there for my eight year old daughter, and how could the kitchen boiler and the fires be kept going when I was up at hospital, half a mile off?

"Mary, how on earth is it to be done?"

But Mary, aflame with eagerness, sees a sudden solution.

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"That sergeant's wife, M'm, Mrs. Waters. If she and her baby had my room, surely she could get the meals and keep in the fire? Miss Christian could answer the bell when she came back from her lessons, and Mrs. Waters could see her husband all the afternoon, and go up again after she'd washed up in the evening."

"Put on your hat, Mary, and go and ask her," is my ultimatum. "It is only three days until cook comes back. If Mrs. Waters will do it—tell her I will pay her well—you shall get off by the first train to-morrow."

Mary returns on winged feet. Mrs. Waters will arrive directly after nine to-morrow, and there will be plenty of time to get the breakfast at eight, before she catches her London train.

So Mary goes off jubilant, and I see Christian up the hill towards the friend's house where she shares a governess, and then I wait about with growing uneasiness for Mrs. Waters. I am never as late as

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this in getting to the wards, and my list of dying men is a long one. Quarter past nine—half past nine—I make up the fires, and a ring at the bell comes at last. But it is a small child with a note.

"Mrs. Waters is sorry not to oblige Mrs. Atkins. Mrs. Waters has gone by the train, and hopes Mrs. Atkins will give my love and say good-bye to my husband."

. . . . . .

All the way up to hospital, I ponder what I am to say to the sergeant.

I go down the long unending corridor. It is said to be a quarter of a mile long, and to nurse's feet it often felt like ten. Sergeant Waters, propped in his usual one-sided way, gazing as usual through the glass door of the ward, but looking terribly faint and grey, whispers:—

"Turn me over, please, Sister."

Waters has been no special friend of mine; he has been rather grumpy and silent when I tried to talk to him, but my heart shakes for him now.

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I turn him gently, and before breaking the news, remark:—

"I wonder why I always find you lying on your bad side, Sergeant?"

And his answer pierces me through.

"I has to watch the door, Madam, in case you passes by."

Waters has a heart to be broken, that is certain, and now I have got to break it. Soften the news as I may, it has got to be told. And somehow I get it done.

But the sergeant's comment is unexpected.

"Gone, has she, Madam? Well, what I says is, *Let her go!*"

But he said nothing against her. Perhaps he felt with Father Stanton—"We are but dust, and you can't expect dust to be always up to the mark."

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So much for some of the wives. Of course there must have been masses of better ones, but I expect they got to their men without my help.

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McFarlane's mother too. McFarlane was on my list of hopeless cases, and I wired for his mother. The man scarcely took his eyes from the door, after I had sent the telegram, he wanted her so much.

"Ye'll ken my mither's vara old," he told me, "but A' doot she'll come."

Sister Moxon showed me a letter next day from Scotland written by McFarlane's married sister. She wrote that her mother was too old to travel in the winter, and they had told her so, but she had got away off to the station when nobody knew, and fortunately she had been missed before the train left, so they had fetched her back. "It was fair ridiculous to ask an old woman of nearly eighty to go so far."

"There are *your* thanks," said Sister.

"What a fool!" said I. "Now McFarlane will die straight off, and the poor old mother will fret the rest of her life out."

Presently I was talking to McFarlane, and he was murmuring through bloodless

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lips, "'Deed and ma mither wass vara old, ye ken," when I glanced up suddenly and said:—

"McFarlane, look quick. *Who* is that at the door?"

"Mither!"

You could not get as much love and pride into that word as McFarlane did, if you tried for a week. There, at the ward door, was a little old woman in bonnet and shawl—her white hair rather blown about, her face a mixture of anxiety and proud relief.

"Laddie," she cried out, as she got to him. "Ma puir laddie, did ye think yer old mither wouldna get?"

But he could not answer at first, and indeed we all gazed at her speechless. Then he muttered brokenly:—

"Whateffer way would ye come, mither? I thocht they would no let ye awa?"

Such a twinkle came in the dear old face.

"Ah, laddie, they thocht to keep ma back, but I wass na caring what they

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thocht. I jus' bided ma time, an' when they wass all bedded, I slippit oot."

And indeed she *had* "slippit oot," for she had walked the ten miles to the junction station where nobody knew her, and got away—away to her boy, and never a bit the worse.

She was so pleased with herself, and McFarlane was so proud of her, I made a little festival in her honour, and dashed away to get sausages and cakes and Sister's permission for an unheard-of event. Mrs. McFarlane had tea at the big table with a cluster of wounded men hanging on her every word.

"A proud woman th' day," was she, and not a whit abashed by the surgeon's bad opinion of her son.

"Deed, an' he'll da fine the now," said the mother, patting his great paw. And fine he did.

"The farthest gone case of septicæmia I ever saw recover," said the surgeon.

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SKEGGS—THE TRAM CONDUCTOR.

Now may GOD guide my pen as I try to write about James Skeggs! For it lies heavily upon me, that if any readers have got thus far in my book, they will be weary of sickness and death and hoping for something lighter. Yet it is utterly impossible to miss out Skeggs and his girl. They were friends of mine for so long in the hospital, and my admiration for them was so great.

Perhaps some people don't think very much about the men on our trams and buses—though they trust their lives in their hands almost every day of the week. But some years ago, a friend of mine, Sibyl Rogers, taught me better.

We had been much apart since our marriages, and when we did meet, it was

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never for long. Therefore I wanted to make the most of every moment with her, and used to be fretted by the incessant interruptions in our talk, from the busy household which revolved around the head-master's wife of a boys' school. It was boys' meals, boys' medicines, boys' music, boys' games, boys' parents, boys' baths, in any case; but Sibyl added on so many other things. Helping a very dull boy with his Latin. Helping a very small boy with his home letter. Dividing up his hamper for a rich boy. Making some-one's old footer clothes fit a poor boy. Doing counsellor to the masters at every odd moment. There was no end to it, night or day. On this occasion I was only staying for one night, and I had stipulated that we should have a quiet tea for once, away from the boys and apart from the masters.

So that I was vexed to see the number of cups that came in on the tray, and remarked sternly :—

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"How many more cups, Sibyl? And where is your faithful promise?"

"It's quite all right," she said. "Nobody is coming. The extra cups are for the Tram," and she began to arrange a smaller tray with cakes and scones, a little teapot and two cups.

"You see the tram terminus is just outside, and the men have ten minutes to wait before they go back to Bath. The pub. is very handy, and unless they get something else, you can't expect them not to go to it. I shouldn't like the servants to go out into the road and wait for the tray, so I just take it out to them myself. And they are such nice men."

"Do you mean that you do it every day."

"Of course I do," and off she went, and I with her.

It was this which first aroused my interest in bus men, and naturally when I found that it was a tram conductor who was in the next bed to Sulliver, I began

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to talk to him, though his name was not on the Dangerous List.

Skeggs was quite bad enough though he had only lost his right arm; he was wounded in both legs as well; but the ward was very heavy just then, and with Sulliver beside him, who ought to have died weeks before, and one man after another who did die while he was in the ward, Skeggs seemed a minor affair. But I lent him books, and found he had a very nice taste in authors, and he told me about his life.

How he had been on a London tram for a couple of years and had got on well. How he had a "young lady" called Marian, who was so clever she had risen to being a clerk in an insurance office, where the boss thought the world of her; and how he used to spend his off-duty time on Sunday evenings. Not with Marian, and not at Church or Chapel, but in walking up and down a street outside some kind of Sunday Hall with a popular service and hymns,

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where it was his work to persuade loafers and passers-by to come in and say their prayers. Good work, it sounded, and Marian sounded nice, too.

He did not say much about the Dardanelles; he was always feverish, and I did not want his temperature to go up from thinking about the horrors he had seen. But once he described how he had landed there, because he had just been reading an account of it in the newspaper, and he was roused to contradict what it said.

"The paper says, Sister, that 'the boats went off from the ships in perfect silence.' That's not true. We was all so pleased to get off the ship the men was singing and shouting as we come along. The country looked as quiet as anything, not a thing stirring anywhere. You wouldn't never think as how any people lived there at all, except for one thing I did notice, and that was a row of old biscuit boxes lying half out of the shallow water by the beach. I

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did think they look queer, and just when the boats got up alongside of them, the guns began blazing and the rifle fire started—thousands of them. Them biscuit tins was to give the Turks their range."

I thought Skeggs was rather slow in getting back his strength, and that a visit from his "young lady" might give him a lift. So I made a private note of her address when he dictated his letter to me, and wrote and asked if she could come down from Holborn and stay a week-end with me. When it was all settled, I told Skeggs. He looked as if Heaven had suddenly flung wide its gate, and presently Marian came. A pretty, dark-haired girl, very neatly turned out, very composed, very efficient. Much more educated than Skeggs, who had told me with tender pride that Marian had raised herself something wonderful, what with extra classes at night and always keeping herself so particular, and that you wouldn't never know her from a real lady now, though her parents were

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as poor as his own. "Why, Sister, she's that industrious, she's come to be a clerk now in an insurance office, and of course she has to dress very smart; and she's only got the one silk blouse and tailor skirt, but she washes her blouse, and presses out her skirt with a hot iron every night of her life!"

Skeggs had some proud hours as his Marian sat beside him, and the envy and admiration of all the ward. I did not see him talking much as I came in and out, but his eyes scarcely left her face. They were large brown eyes, and they spoke for him, as a faithful dog's eyes will speak to his master; deeper love and admiration than mere words can hold.

But the surgeons were rather long over the inspection of Skeggs' right leg that Sunday, and presently they fetched the great civilian specialist who had come down to Netley for no other purpose than to briefly say whether wounded limbs should be taken off or remain on. A hangman

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had an easier billet, for he did not have the decision left to him. Marian, of course, was not in the ward during the doctor's rounds, but I was, and heard all they said with a sinking heart. Skeggs did not hear all—but he guessed the worst, and as the great man went through the door with attendant surgeons and Sister, he beckoned to me to come to him.

"Sister, they're going to take my leg off. It's my right leg. So I won't have no right arm nor no right leg. It'll *be hard on Marian*, Sister, won't it?"

Presently, when all is tidied up, Marian is allowed to come back, and they are alone together. When I return to fetch her she looks up, still composed, still hopeful she is competent, even to deal with this.

"James has been telling me they are going to take his leg off, Sister, but I tell him not to mind. I will make it all up to him when we get married."

She meant it. She believed that she

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could. And Skeggs, gazing up at her entranced, believed it also.

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But God, knowing and loving them even better than they knew and loved each other, had prepared a better way.

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Though it is seven years since that Sunday at Netley, every Sunday afternoon when a tram draws up at its terminus outside a university city, a tray of tea and cake is carried out to the driver and conductor. They are a fine set of men in our trams, civil, patient, and hardworked, and they deserve anything we can do for them. All are ex-soldiers who went through the war. But it is for Skeggs' sake that the tray of tea is carried out.

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CHRISTMAS, 1916.

We have come to Christmas, and the great hospital intends to make the utmost of the festival. Every possible convalescent is allowed to go home on leave—yet the Sister's work is heavier than ever. The lists for presents, the decoration of the wards, all get achieved when one would have thought there could not be one spare moment to attend to them. There is an army of willing helpers with the presents from all the country round. I cannot think what Mrs. Yorke from the big house close by must have spent on the men—but her cheque-book must have been accustomed to that, for she had stood godmother to Netley for years past. I never saw such immense baskets of new-laid eggs, such rooms full of cigarettes, such piles and piles of boxes of chocolates, as

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the Sisters and Orderlies had to distribute Of course the men who are able to get up are the *real* decorators, and if one has lived for thirty years in the army one knows how lavish of coloured paper, how inventive of design, soldiers' decorations can be. But these men in hospital surpass all. One ward represents a desperately heavy snowstorm, one is full of icicles and frost; the next a Japanese garden, where bandaged men in bed smiled cheerfully under wistaria pergolas, and cherry trees in full flower.

In the medical division we are even grander, and an immense Peace Ship fills almost the half of a big ward.

There is a little Highlander dying of dysentery and wounds just opposite it. Somehow he has stuck to his pipes all the way from Gallipoli; he had them tied to his stretcher when he was brought here, and no one had the heart to say that they must have germs in them and could not hang beside his bed.

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A man from the same Highland regiment is down the corridor, and the story has got about that out in Gallipoli little piper McCabe rallied the battalion afresh to the advance, playing his pipes as he lay wounded on the hill-side.

To-day he cannot easily turn his head to see them, so he has asked to have them on a chair beside his bed.

That is one of the pictures I often see above the Altar, blotting out the beauty of reredos and painted window—little McCabe, his bed drawn close to a blazing fire which had ceased to warm him—looking at the Peace Ship, with his thin hands still holding on to his pipes.

Only a few days before Christmas an unexpected wire from the front line in France has sent my spirits flying up sky high. "The Colonel" had a week's leave —could I possibly take him in, with his wife and baby and nurse. YES—if the rest of us had to sleep in the road.

And in a few minutes I found a lovely

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plan. The people who owned the house just behind mine, which had such a heavenly view, were going away for a Christmas visit. Just think how perfect if I could rent it as an annexe to my own house for the week! I could—I did. There were no extra servants to be had, but we could manage somehow, and the young husband and wife could have that pretty sitting-room looking out on the sea, and plenty of upstairs space.

Just for the day I was getting ready for them, I took a holiday from hospital. And for once, I felt justified in having a fling.

I had never had but the one son and he had always been too dear for me to want another. The pride of my life! The joy of my heart! He was all that and everything else. And from the day war had been declared I had always known he would fall. Always. Always. My husband had been fighting just as long, and often I was anxious for him too, but I always felt

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he would come home—he might be wounded, but I was sure he would not be killed. It was the boy whose fate lay heavy on my heart from the beginning. The cheery boy, who had turned into a man of endless sorrows and anxieties in a few months. The smart young subaltern when war began; now the Colonel of his regiment—his beloved Steelbacks—with three wound stripes and two decorations. Proud of him? I could have died of pride. But it always seemed unearthly pride—I always knew I must lose him.

Only a few weeks before Christmas I had travelled down from Waterloo to Southampton with Lady Tennyson. It was about twenty years since the time when we had lived near her at Freshwater and I had not seen her since. But I had admired her very much, and when the lady in deep mourning who sat in my carriage lifted her heavy veil, I recognised her at once with a shock of sorrowful surprise. I had never seen a face so

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altered and suffused with grief, and I remembered that she had lately lost her youngest son.

Presently she began to speak of him. It was as if some heavy door had been unloosed, and all her sorrow came flooding out. Her tears so rained down as she spoke, that I seemed to be listening to the very heart of grief. To this day I could repeat almost all that she told me during that hour in the train—but I will not write it. The terrible suddenness of her sorrow seemed to have given her a shock beyond her strength to bear.

"We had gone to meet him at Dover. His place was laid for dinner at the hotel, when they carried his body into the hall."

She repeated this, musingly, more than once. She showed me the Admiral's letter; the letter her son had written to the widow of one of his men. The widow had sent it to her after the disaster, that she might read it: it was a wonderful

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letter for a young lieutenant to have written.

Towards the end of the journey she said :

"I cannot think why I have told you all this. I did not think I could tell anyone. And I never knew you very well. It is so strange. I feel as if you exactly understood it all, and yet you have not lost your own boy."

And at that, I gave her this answer :—

"No. I have not lost him yet, but *I know that I shall. I know it is coming.* Sometimes I could wish it were over, if only I might know that it had been quickly over."

Lady Tennyson looked at me as if she could see into my heart, and knew herself that it must be so. She did not attempt to argue about it. We held each other's hands a moment and then parted. I felt the strongest conviction that she would very shortly follow her boy, and it was perhaps a fortnight later that she died.

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But now my own sorrow was withheld. Here was the telegram. God was going to let me have Garry for Christmas! It seemed too wildly good to be true. That is a horrid expression—we ought to know that only the good things are really true in the end. At any rate, he was coming; and I felt as if the whole Artillery band was playing inside me. Our niggardly Christmas went to pieces in a moment. I must go off to Southampton in a taxi at once, if not sooner; the children joyfully accompanying me. The largest turkey, the best cake, the finest of everything I could think of, had to be brought back—war rations forgotten for once And flowers!—such a treat to sweeten the little rooms with pots of Roman hyacinth. Garry loved flowers as much as I do.

So that Christmas at Netley is all Garry to me.

We are not entirely happy. Twenty times a day we say, "If only Father could have had leave too." But the General had

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been home quite recently, and anyhow Garry was perfect. Memory is so strange ; one has no idea why one moment remains always with one, and a hundred others pass entirely away. I cannot remember a quarter of the things we must have done together, or how he looked or what he said. He must have seen enough of wounds and misery in France, but he buckled on his belt and came up to the hospital to see my men, the very first day. Some things are fresh and lovely as when he did and said them, but he would not like them written about. As if it were this moment, I can see him walking down the long corridor beside me, and the men's look of eager pleasure as he spoke to them. I see him bending over poor dying Skeggs, and hear Skeggs' quick question :—

"How are things going out in France, Sir?"

And I see Garry's smile and tender look as he answers him.

"My word, Madam!" says Skeggs

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afterwards, "that's the sort o' commanding officer to take you over the top. I'll lay his reg'ment's proud of him."

"I'll lay that I am, Skeggs," and we laugh, but oh! the pleasure the words gave me.

New Year's Day brings the end of the Colonel's leave. He is gone; and any scrap of unbroken heart I keep, is going to bits over Skeggs.

The kind insurance office has spared Marian for a longer holiday, but there is entreaty in her lover's eyes, and when I whisper "What is it, Skeggs?" he whispers lower still, "Don't let her stay, Sister—*Don't.*"

I think he is afraid his nerve will go and yearns that she shall never see his spirit weaken, whatever the surgeons may still do to him.

Presently, when he sleeps, I turn heavily home to a belated meal. But near the house I meet my charwoman, a lady of ample figure to whom the distress of Europe

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has brought double income and much food in my kitchen. As I stop for a moment to pay her wages, and observe that the hospital is very full now, she gives me her view of the situation :—

"Is it indeed, m'm? Well, as I says to my 'usband only this very mornin', in *this* war, I says, all suffers alike, and some more than others."

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TOM SCOTT.

Tom Scott of Laggish was not like Sulliver and Pumford. He was a young man who had possessions.

A grand looking fellow, a young sheep farmer from Ayr, over six feet, fair curly hair, a bright colour and fine blue eyes, he exactly fulfilled one's idea of David.

He was the eldest son at home and his father was an old man, getting feeble, so Tom had the entire management of the farm. When war began it seemed clear that whoever else ought to join the army, it was impossible that he should leave his sheep.

So time went on, and prices rose, and the farmers round began to make money. It was Tom's chance to work up his stock and make some solid profit to put against the bad years. His mother and sisters had no one else, and the work was heavy.

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Yet when things began to go badly in France, and in the Dardanelles, Tom could not stay at home.

"Sister, a great strong chap like me was the sort they wanted—I had to go."

I could see that. I could see the opposition there would be. I could see Tom's position. Nothing to gain and everything to lose. Yet bound to go.

I came to know him in hospital through spending many hours with a dying man in the next bed. For Tom had not been out long before he was wounded, and his right leg had to come off at a time when amputations were common as dentistry at Netley.

His mother was sent for and he was thought a good recovery. When I went to say good-night to him one evening, Mrs. Scott said, "I'm going home to Scotland to-night, Sister. You will be often in and out with Tom, I know."

"Going to-night!" I was rather horrified but did not wish to show it.

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"Can't you stay a few days longer, Mrs. Scott?"

No, she said, her husband was not fit to be left, she had never come away from him before, and the doctor said Tom was doing finely now. I watched Tom as I talked a minute or two longer, and then got my chance of a word alone with his mother in the corridor.

"Are you sure the doctor understood that you were going so soon? And all the way back to Ayr?"

Yes—she was quite sure. Why did I mind? didn't I think Tom was quite safe to leave?

That was just it. I did not think him safe at all,—not for this world. In my inmost heart I had never felt it, and this evening I thought him less so than before.

It was an awkward moment. A nurse, and especially only a demi-semi-nurse like myself, should not disagree with a surgeon's opinion, nor alarm a poor mother who had to tear herself away from her boy—so I

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hesitated, and said I would just go and find the doctor, and ask him myself, to make certain. I did not like doing it at all, but I felt too uneasy to leave it, so went along to the Divisional Sister's private room, and interrupted both her and the surgeon in their weighty nightly consultation over their case lists.

"Tom Scott's mother returning to Scotland—well—why shouldn't she, Mrs. Atkins?"

"Isn't it very soon? Isn't he too ill?" I am very nervous and terrified of being silly and a nuisance, but it had to be said.

"Good gracious! Why, he's doing as well as possible. You get death on your brain, my dear lady, from always being with the dying. Tom Scott isn't one of your cases at all, you know," said the surgeon.

He was a clever man, and a kind man, and a man I particularly liked—but at that moment I felt he thought me a fool, and I was worn out and my manners gave.

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"Very well. I will tell Mrs. Scott it is quite all right for her to leave him. But *I* believe he is going to die," and I went out of the room.

Mrs. Scott left, and I went home,—furious with myself for having contradicted the surgeon, *and* in front of the Divisional Sister, *and* an orderly; I deserved to be dismissed the hospital, and perhaps I should be. Not much sleep for me that night! Before nine next morning, I hurry along to make humblest apology, and meet my friend as I go.

"Apologise! To *me!!* I was just coming to look for you in dust and ashes. *Tom Scott is dying fast.*"

And so I hurry on again, faster still, and come to Tom's ward at last, and the moment our eyes meet I see that he knows as well as I do. His people and the neighbours who implored him not to join the army were right, the farm will go to pieces and his mother's heart be broken. For all his youth and splendid strength, he is done for.

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Is that all there is to be said? No. That is the low road and Tom takes the high road and he'll be in Scotland before them. Many times we hum those words for our comfort. *Scotland?* Yes—or Paradise if you prefer the word. Paradise was what the dying Scotchman meant when he wrote the ballad.

I never heard one word of regret all that long day and the next. There was no teaching or help needed, Tom had loved his Bible and been a deacon of the kirk. He did not falter in his faith now. There are no words to express how that alters the matter. Nor can I describe how different a case can be where there is earnest desire but no knowledge. I found one lad steadily reading Leviticus one morning to strengthen himself for the amputation of his leg—he knew no difference between one part of the Bible and another. I don't think Tom questioned any why or wherefore. CHRIST had died to save him—very well then, of course he was

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proud to follow on and die for his country. There was nothing more to be said.

Late in the evening, Sunday evening it was, the choir boys came in procession down the long corridors, and old familiar hymns rang out as they slowly passed the wards.

They sang "Abide with me" as they came to Tom's ward, and he whispered all the verses as they sang.

"When other helpers fail and comforts flee." Ah Tom! they had all failed and fled from you then—every one—what has religion brought you to? what can it do for you, who have lost all for it?

"I triumph still if Thou abide with me" sang on the choir boys in their easy treble. Tom cannot sing, he is choking for every breath. But he is triumphing. I was there and could see it, clear as day. His sister Netta did not go back with his mother. She is there to share the watch, and now we both sit beside him.

It grows very late: the lights are lowered

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for the night, the doctors have made their last round. We have had Prayers long since and I doubt if Tom heard any earthly voices later than the choir, but the men in the long ward want to sleep and I don't like them to have to lie listening to his loud broken-down breathing. So I think it may help if I read, and I turn over my Daily Service Book, and read aloud a verse as I find it fit.

"And I heard a great voice out of Heaven saying. . . . God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain. . . . He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. . . . Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear My voice and open the door I will come in to him and will sup with him and he with Me. . . . He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels."

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I pause awhile between the verses, and now I pause longer and think it is enough. But there is a rough fellow in the next bed to Tom. I have noticed him playing cards with a friend and heard money chink, which is forbidden, and I have thought he might object to this enforced listening to the Scriptures. But now he suddenly speaks in a queer choked voice.

"Don't stop, Sister. Go on reading."

That helps me, and I turn to other pages.

"Hereby perceive we the love of God because He laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. . . . Jesus said, Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. . . . I go to prepare a place for you. . . . That the world may know that Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me."

Not very long after that the ward was quiet and the men slept.

. . . . . .

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And here I fancy a reader lays down this little book and says, "This is *impossible* to read! One death after another. No relief at all." No. There was not much relief. Not for Tom Scott, and Sulliver, and all that shining throng. They *did* die, one after another. But because they died there is plenty of relief for you. You can go to the Lending Library and bring home half-a-dozen stories of wit and love, or twenty dozen of lust and luxury, so cleverly portrayed that you may fancy yourself for an hour the possessor of millions, the admiration of the crowd, the sprightly breaker of all the old-fashioned ten commandments.

And then you can have a cosy tea and go on with all the pleasant easy life of every-day in England, now that peace is getting settled and the cost of living going down.

But would you have these comfortable hours if our army had not fought to the end, if Germany had won the war?

Sister Moxon came to see me the other day. She gave her health for Netley, and

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I fancied that during her three years of illness she might feel as I had done once, and fancy that all the young men of England had died.

So I took her down into Oxford between eleven and twelve, and she saw the hundreds of undergraduates tearing along on their bicycles to lectures, thronging the book shops, the tailors, the cafés; talking, laughing, swinging along the High in the pride of youth, the pride of life.

Sister loved it all: the age and beauty of the Colleges, the glory of the Churches, towers and spires, the flood of youth and strength in the crowded street, and presently she gave me her summing up:—

"To think of all the men in those beds at Netley! *They* helped to keep this for England."

But they did not do it for thanks. Or to be talked about. Or read about. So that if no one cares to know about these men who died so tiresomely often, it does not matter. Not to them.

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AN UNKNOWN WARRIOR.

My time at Netley has come to its sorrowful end. I have packed, paid, and finished down at my little house, and handed over my jobs at the Hospital. There are not many good-byes to be said; my hopeless cases have almost all passed, one by one, to where there shall be no more parting; a slender few have recovered sufficiently to be sent to convalescent places. Saturday night sees all bare and ready for Monday's early train to Salisbury. Sunday morning finds me in Netley Chapel for the last time, and very shaky with the superhuman effort to keep dry eyes and a stiff upper lip. There is just one Sister up in B. division who could not be found when I made my farewells yesterday, so after the service I climb the stairs to her little private bunk.

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"Going to-morrow?" she says, rather bitterly. "Yes, you all go. Every one goes, except me."

It is quite true; not only do the men die, or move to a lighter hospital, day after day, week after week (it has begun to be also *year after year* in this war): but the doctors, the sisters, the nurses, continually move on out to France or farther east. Very hard the seniors find it to spend their strength on incessant fresh people—but it has to be done.

"And I have a case just come in, exactly your sort," Sister adds presently.

"Dying, do you mean?"

"Oh yes, dying, of course, but in the most awful state—not fit to touch. No, no, I didn't mean you to go to him. I know you are not fit, and he is septic enough to finish anyone."

"Can his people come to him?" I ask, half through the door.

"*People?*" echoes Sister. "Why, he has no identity disc, and no uniform, and

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you can't tell if he is officer or private or even an Englishman!"

"Then show me where he is, Sister, like a dear, and let me be with him for ten minutes at any rate."

With a murmur as to disinfectants when I leave, and an injunction not to go too near, Sister shows me a ward full of new cases being lifted from stretchers to beds, and one bed screened and pushed apart.

"He'll never recover consciousness," says Sister. "Be sure not to stay many minutes," and she hurries on.

The man is not disfigured as far as I can see above the sheet, but his dark hair is dripping wet, and as he lies there with closed eyes and grey-white face, steam rises from his body in a thick cloud. I never saw that before—and it is useless to notice it now. I must do what I can. So I move back a dripping lock from his forehead and bend down and speak.

"My poor son, you are so ill. Shall I pray for you?"

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And a tear rolls down from the closed eyes, and the lips open for one clear word in answer:—

"*Do.*"

The voice, muffled and faint though it was, seemed to me the voice of a gentleman.

The lips moved again as I said the Lord's Prayer, and he certainly followed it, but when I try to get his name, the flash of consciousness has gone. I wait and wait but there is no further movement. Sister comes back and I disinfect and go home, but cannot rest. In an hour I am hurrying down the corridor again, and back in the ward. In vain—the bed is empty.

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EPILOGUE.

THOSE who have read these stories may say they make a sad book—though I have not put down a twentieth part of the wounds I saw and the deaths I watched.

Though no one could call the two years at Netley easy; though the anxiety over each fight in France, and the tearing pain of waiting for news, seemed endless, and though I became more and more sleepless and in constant physical pain, yet those are the two years I count my best, the years I was most grieved to end. Out of all my life, and I have had a great deal of happiness, the time for which I felt "To this end was I born." Out of all my life, though I have known many fine men and women, the time when I lived in such a fellowship of noble people, that the world seemed transfigured, and Heaven scarcely farther than the next ward.

We had doctors and surgeons at Netley

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who had given up big houses in Harley Street and incomes to match, to work in day and night reliefs, and live as best they could. One doctor, in particular, stands out in my memory. He had a fatal disease which prevented his going to the fighting line. His only chance was rest and fresh air, and he never seemed to get either. Day in and day out he was in his stuffy office, directing everything, dismissing the convalescents, admitting and allotting to the wards one train full of stretcher cases after another. I hated to give him an extra word to write, but every convalescent I had out to tea must have his pass signed by Major Russell—and I never saw him impatient once.

Even the Orderlies, how they did glorify their office! Some of them were unpaid, and really civilian helpers. I remember one, a perfect wonder. In ordinary times, the village baker; but a very superior and unusual sort of baker, and of course war gave him his chance of heroism in earnest.

He would have gone to France if he could,

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but that being impossible, he came up to the great hospital every afternoon and gave wounded men their hot tubs, to save the Sisters, and then spent hour after hour drawing kits and checking equipments.

Mr. Williams was really a most noble knight.

And I remember a splendid sergeant in the Army Medical Corps—Sergeant Marr —who knew the ins and outs of every patient, and would put up their relations if I had no room.

It was very difficult sometimes to find men whose friends had come to inquire for them. Sometimes it was too late. Sergeant Marr would come tracking me down the corridor, from ward to ward, to ask what I could remember about the man who died in B. 2 Surgical, in the bed nearest the fire, some weeks ago? And I would be unable to remember anything perhaps, having been with some twenty deaths since, and would ask why the friends had come so late.

"Well, madam, he'd gone off on his

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own some years ago—and enlisted, and his parents never knew where he was. I suppose I can say you said prayers with him? You don't think you followed at the funeral?"

"No, Sergeant. I have stopped going to funerals now unless it's a very great friend."

And Sergeant Marr would hurry away and find some one else in trouble and do his best for them. No pay could ever have been adequate for the unending pains that man took about his work, and the comfort he was to the Sisters in his dependableness.

. . . . . .

Very few people, I fancy, knew a quarter of what dear old Mrs. Harold did for the men. Among many other things she lent me her chauffeur's cottage as a temporary refuge for the relations of men on the Danger List. We had a great day furnishing it, and it was a huge mercy to have it so near the Hospital. Some very nice wives used that cottage, and no one abused it.

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Of course, queer people came to Netley sometimes to distract our thoughts. There was the young man who was not a Chaplain, but who wore a fancy uniform, meant to resemble the same. There was a difficulty about my lunch in the early days, which was solved by the arrival of a tray of sandwiches and tea from the canteen, to be eaten between 1 and 1.30 in the Chaplain's office, at that hour supposed to be empty.

But this young man got there before me, and when I came down from the wards, there was the tray and the soiled cup and plate—but nothing more—except the young man.

"Oh!" said I. "Some one has eaten my lunch by mistake. What shall I do?"

"Pity," was the careless answer. "But you can easily go to the canteen and buy some more."

Next day exactly the same thing happened, with one difference. The young man was putting down the empty cup as I opened the door.

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Epilogue

Newcomers in institutions must walk delicately, and you cannot come straight from watching death to quarrelling about lunch, so I only said,

"Perhaps you have not had any dinner to-day, Mr. H.?" He wilted slightly, but was able to reply.

"Oh, yes—I dine at twelve. But I am very partial to a cup of tea afterwards—and as you were late, you see, I thought you did not want it."

I was a very weary worm, but I turned at that and reported him to the Chaplain.

It is a desperate business when religious societies are deceived and take on a man of this type. For he was paid to assist the clergy in their work among the wounded. But the wounded managed him better. They began to call out as the black uniform appeared in the corridor. "Time *you* went over the Top," and then ward after ward would take up the refrain, "Over the Top! Over the To-op!" and so the young man had to leave after all.

Then there were a whole stack of people

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who came to teach the wounded how to employ their hands and distract their minds, by drawing, painting and embroidering. An amazing amount of pleasure and relief they gave because they did it so extremely well.

I like to remember Amy Stobart, giving up her car once a week for the use of the tired Sisters, and sitting day after day designing needlework landscapes and drawing regimental badges to scale, and then taking them round the wards with silks and wools to her special men and giving them really artistic counsel. She used to have fresh butter and eggs for them too, from her home farm in Yorkshire, and when, instead of a death, I actually had a wedding on my hands, it was Amy Stobart's car that took bride and bridegroom to church and down to my house for their wedding tea, and then took the bridegroom safely back to his bed in the hospital before it got dark! That was a really nice war wedding, and as Chris had just come home on ten days' leave,

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promoted to oak leaves once more, we had a General to give away the bride, and made it quite a cheery affair.

It would fill a book by itself if I recalled the chaplains and their work. They had better write their own record. But the man who delighted my very soul was not a chaplain, he was Bishop Ferguson Davie, home on leave from Singapore. His wife came to stay with me and help for six weeks in the autumn of 1916 when I was in the tiny lodgings and had not secured a house. She was a Doctor of Medicine before she was a Bishop's wife, and the finest woman I ever met, except another Bishop's wife, Mary Collins of Gibraltar.

My landlady declined to put her up; the adjoining cottages were crammed; there was only one other house with rooms to let, and "the railway porter had the big room, so the Bishop's lady could have the little one." It really was a horrid little place, and my heart sank as I looked at it. Couldn't the porter change over? Just to oblige the Bishop's lady who was giving

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up her holiday to nurse the wounded? No. He was like my landlady: "He mustn't be put out." So he kept the best room and Mrs. Ferguson Davie had the little horror, and never made the faintest allusion to its discomforts. Down at the Red Cross they soon found out her value and she was made Sister-in-Charge of one of the huts. But the day before she took over, a young V.A.D. saw her standing idle for a moment—almost for a certainty she was far from idle but lost in prayer for the man she had just left; but young V.A.D.'s can't know everything, and this one suggested that if she had nothing else to do, the sooner she turned to and scrubbed out all the lockers the better. And this the grey-haired lady immediately knelt down and did for the rest of the morning —without a word to the girl, or any mention of the incident to anyone.

I should never have heard of it if the V.A.D. herself had not told the tale when the scrubber turned into Ward Sister the following day.

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Epilogue

When the Bishop came down to see his wife, I took him round my men. He had not much time, but in five minutes you could see what he was—a man of Consolation. So quiet, so tender, so reverent of the pain and wounds—two minutes of his whispered prayer was worth half the Prayer Book from a lesser man. He got us an extra Chaplain after his visit, and the Sacrament was much oftener taken to the wards after that.

The Easter Communion in 1917 was a wonderful hour. No Altar frontal of fine worked silk and gold can ever equal the White Ensign over a trestle-table; no reredos excel, in my eyes, the picture of the Crucified in front of the Union Jack. No congregation be more fit to receive the Holy Mysteries, than these who lie around the Altar, white as their pillows. Little Sulliver and Skeggs of the Tram the nearest, since they cannot even raise their hands to the Priest. When I hear "Bread of Heaven on Thee we feed," I think of that early morning, and I see them all

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again, even the Night Sister kneeling by the door, who was due to have gone off duty long before. Yes, they all had Heavenly Food. I am not worthy to even write of it.

I will grant that all the deaths I saw, Pumford, Child, Sulliver, Davis, and their many followers, sometimes made tears run scalding down my face as I walked home at night down the long hospital avenue where no one could see. But they were never *bitter* tears. What lesser fate could you wish such men? To die for your country, without murmur or hope of reward. Is not that like CHRIST?

Supposing CHRIST had not died? Many cleverish young people in these days cast a doubt upon it, but suppose it was *quite certain* that He never had lived for us, or died for us, can we imagine the blackness of our state? Then it is our joy and not our sorrow that He did. In its infinitely less degree, what else is it but joy, that here and now, these men were content also to die for us?

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Epilogue

When the thrush sings in the spring evenings, when the country is green and sweet, and man comes home from his labour, is it really so sad that these will not come home again?

It chokes one at first, but we know, we are absolutely certain in our inmost souls, that they took the high road, the straight road to God.

If we want to forget all they bore from the enemy to save us from bearing anything, then we are taking the low road, which will never lead us to God or to them.

Why not be like the dear woman I found down at Bucks in Devonshire? She was a fisherman's wife who gave teas at tables outside their cottage in August. Visitors came to look at the lovely little village—so like its grand neighbour Clovelly, but so quiet and hidden, down its steep ferny lane. I took two Australians there in 1917, and when she saw their khaki, she showed me two enlarged photographs, over her fire-place, of her own two sons, all she had, and both

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fighting. In 1919 I was near there again and felt I must get a car and go and see if they had come back to her. I saw her standing in the afternoon sunshine at her door, putting the white cloth ready on the tea-table, just as she had done for us two years before, but she looked much older and I could not ask the question.

When I came up to her, she said, "Be you the lady what kissed me when you come, two years agone? Oh, my dear soul, they be both dead, my two boys. Both the two on 'em. Be your's gone too?"

. . . . . .

Well. But last year I saw her again. Still busy. Still setting out tea and Devonshire cream and cutrounds for cheery families who came for their pleasure and left her in the evenings to her empty cottage. And she had no word of repining or envy. But as we talked together she said, "There ain't been no sun out down these parts, not for days past, but when you comes along and speaks about the boys,

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that fair brings the sunshine. I can't abide they shud be forgot. I tell'd 'ee, my dear, how my last boy Harry, 'ee didn't get killed out to France; 'ee got 'ome terrible ill, an' died nex' day; 'twas that Influenza time; 'ee couldn't take nothin'; nothin' at all 'ee couldn't; an' last of all 'ee looks at me an 'ee says, 'Mother,' 'ee says, '*take the cup.*'

"You knows, my dear, folks 'ud tell 'ee that 'ee just meant for to say 'Take the feeding cup 'cause t'aint no more use me tryin' t' drink.'"

She paused very solemnly a moment, and laid her hand on my arm. "But 'tweren't like that as *I* thinks—Harry, 'ee says, 'Mother, take the cup,' an' 'twas the last words 'ee spoke. So, my dear, first Sunday ivry month, I goes up to Church an' I takes the Cup o' God, an' w'en I be come outside, I looks up at sky an' I says, 'Harry,' I says, 'I done what you said.'"

. . . . . .

Look on a little way, and where is the

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sadness? They will not return to us here, to grow old, or slack, or spoilt, and to dread illness as others do. No.

"From the contagion of the world's slow stain they are secure."

. . . . . .

Look a little further yet. Why, we are going to them! The sadness of farewell is all long past, their welcome of us is all to come. There they are, their tears long since wiped away. When the glory and honour of the nations was brought into the City of God, who brought more than they? The men of old were wont to say, "Let us now praise famous men and our fathers who begat us." It is given to us to say in pride:—

"*Let us also praise famous men and the sons whom we have begotten.*"

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